



U.S. Army

Edgewood Chemical Biological Center

Public Affairs Office

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News Release

Army Volunteers Make One-of-a-Kind Bag to Assist Disabled Veteran

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Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. – The U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM) Volunteers for Medical Engineering (VME) recently made a one-of-a-kind bag specifically designed for a community member who uses a wheelchair. The bag will allow its recipient, James Johnson, of Havre de Grace, Md., to carry up to three grocery bags on a fixed route bus. (*See attached photo of the bag*).

“This bag will give me access to my seatbelt and enable me to carry more bags,” stated Johnson, who is a Vietnam War veteran. Before the bag, Johnson would often times have to use the seatbelt of his wheelchair to strap down grocery bags, and the strap could only hold down one bag.

The VME Team, located at the Edgewood Area of the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG-EA), helps individuals with disabilities become more independent through the use of innovative engineering. Other recent projects include designing and making a wheelchair backpack to allow a handicapped high school student easy access to her school materials, and designing and making pot/pan fences for stove burners to allow one-handed cooking by a disabled client.

The VME Team was recently recognized by the ARC Northern Chesapeake Region and by Harford County Executive, James Harkins, for their efforts in the community and for their volunteer work in designing and fabricating innovative medical devices for the disabled and elderly in Harford and Cecil County communities.

The VME program was started in 1978 by John Staehlin, P.E., an engineer at Westinghouse Electronics in Lithicum, Maryland. VME is a Maryland 501 (3) c non-profit organization. The program at APG began in 1998, and is unique because it is the first government organization to get involved in the VME program. Since 1998, the team has completed 14 projects for its clients.

The personnel who worked on the bag were Laurie Ann Kwiedorowicz, Gayanne Basham, and Lester Strauch. Currently, there are 20 VME Team members with backgrounds including engineering, science and occupational therapy.

For more information about the VME program, please contact Jim Allingham, Public Affairs Officer, at (410) 436-4347, or SBCCOM VME Team Laurie Kwiedorowicz at (410) 436-2274.

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